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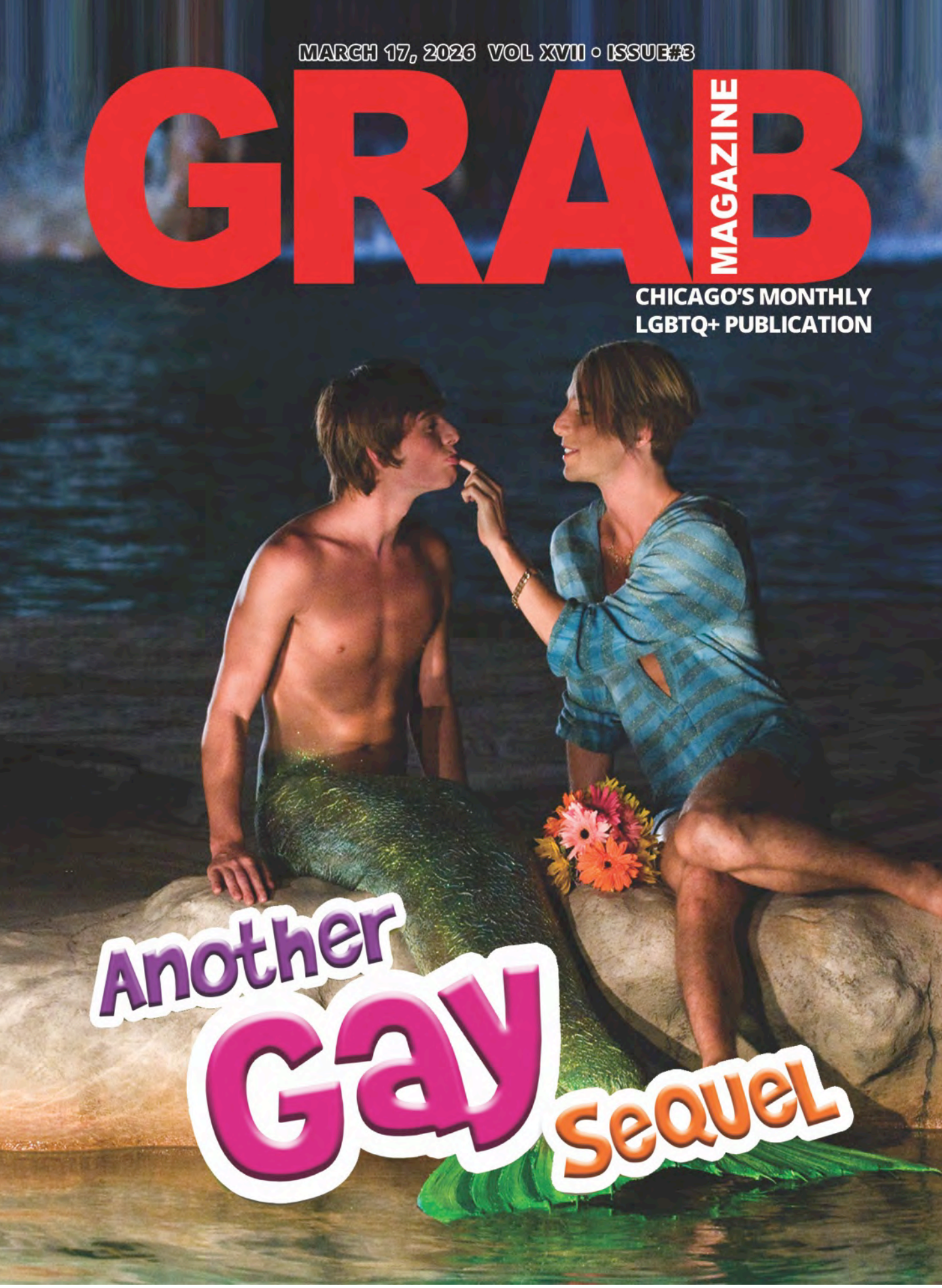
# GRAB MAGAZINE

CHICAGO'S MONTHLY
LGBTQ+ PUBLICATION



## Another Gay Sequel

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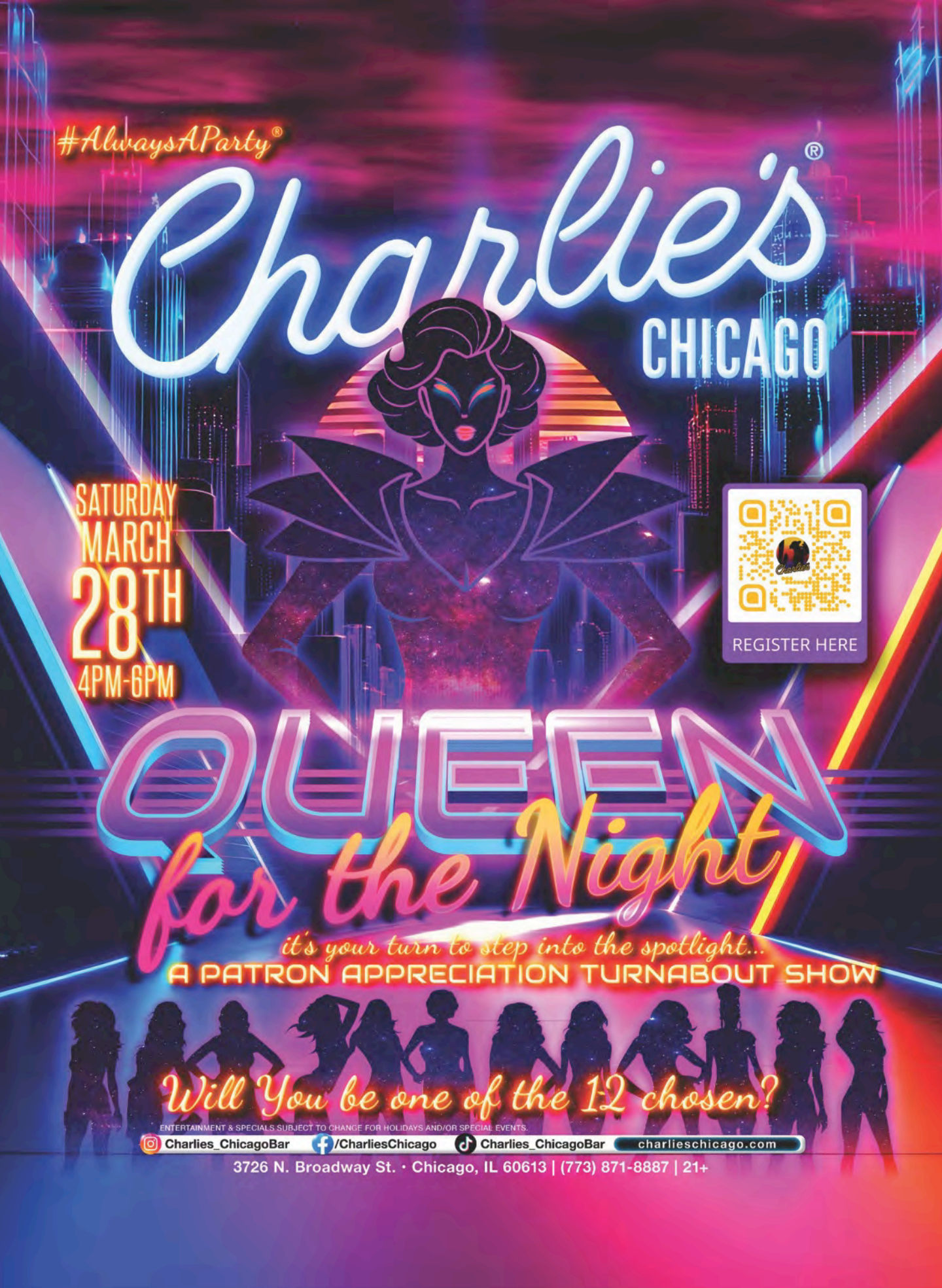
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# GRAB TODD

## ‘Another Gay Sequel’ Returns!

### The Film’s Director, Todd Stephens, Rewinds to a Wilder, Pre-Grindr Gay Era

**By Mike Bahr**

*Photo by Phil Smrek*

When Another Gay Sequel: Gays Gone Wild! first splashed onto screens in 2008, it was loud, raunchy, gloriously inappropriate, and proudly, unapologetically queer. Now, as Breaking Glass Pictures re-releases the cult-favorite comedy on March 3, director Todd Stephens is revisiting the sun-soaked chaos that made the film a time capsule of late-2000s gay nightlife. Packed with outrageous Spring Break antics, fearless sex positivity, and unforgettable cameos from icons like RuPaul and Scott Thompson, the sequel captures a pre-Grindr, pre-influencer moment when the queer community thrived in bars, beaches, and wild competition rather than on apps. Nearly two decades later, Stephens reflects on the film’s camp legacy, its refusal to sanitize queer desire, and why its messy, anything-goes spirit still feels subversive today.

**Mike Bahr: Another Gay Sequel has been described as a “time capsule” of late-2000s gay nightlife. When you watch it now, what makes you laugh the hardest? What makes you think, wow, we really lived like that?**
***Todd Stephens:*** When I watch it now, I laugh hardest at all the incredible cameos we were lucky enough to land—especially RuPaul, Lady Bunny, and Colton Ford, may he rest in peace. Seeing Scott Thompson return as the dad is also hilarious. Everyone showed up ready to play and have fun, and you can feel that energy in every scene. It really captures a moment in time when gay nightlife felt outrageous, communal, and completely uninhibited.

**MB: The film proudly exists in a pre-Grindr, pre-influencer world. If Gays Gone Wild! were set in 2026, what would be the most absurd update to the competition?**
***TS:*** The smartphone literally came out while we were making the movie. I remember my producer showing me Grindr and thinking, Wow, this is going to change everything. I had no idea how right that instinct was. If we made the film today, there would somehow be even more sex—which is wild to say, considering how much there already is. Apps like Grindr and Sniffies have amplified hookup culture exponentially. We’d absolutely have to address how instant and anonymous everything has become.

**MB: Camp, chaos, and sex positivity are baked into this movie. Did you ever feel pressure to soften it for wider audiences?**
***TS:*** When we premiered at Frameline in San Francisco, the Castro Theatre was packed. A woman stood up and asked me, “What will straight people think of this film?” I said, “I don’t give a f**k.” I made Another Gay Sequel: Gays Gone Wild for gay people. That was always the mission. The studio encouraged me to go as far as possible with the queerness. “No” wasn’t in our vocabulary. There were no apologies and no fear. It created a world where being gay wasn’t the issue—the characters were just trying to get laid like everyone else. I’ve never had more fun making a movie.

**MB: Andy’s evolution from awkward underdog to confident heartthrob is one of the sequel’s biggest surprises. What did you want that journey to say?**
***TS:*** Andy starts out feeling pressure to be the wildest, most promiscuous version of himself. But along the way, he falls for someone. Through that experience, he finds confidence—not from sex alone, but from connection. His growth is about discovering what actually fulfills him.

**MB: The “Miss Gay Gone Wild” contest is ridiculous and weirdly revealing. Were you parodying hookup culture or celebrating it?**
***TS:*** Both! There’s a lot to poke fun at in queer sex culture. But the film isn’t laughing at anyone, it’s laughing with everyone. It’s ultimately sex-positive. The humor comes from love, not judgment.

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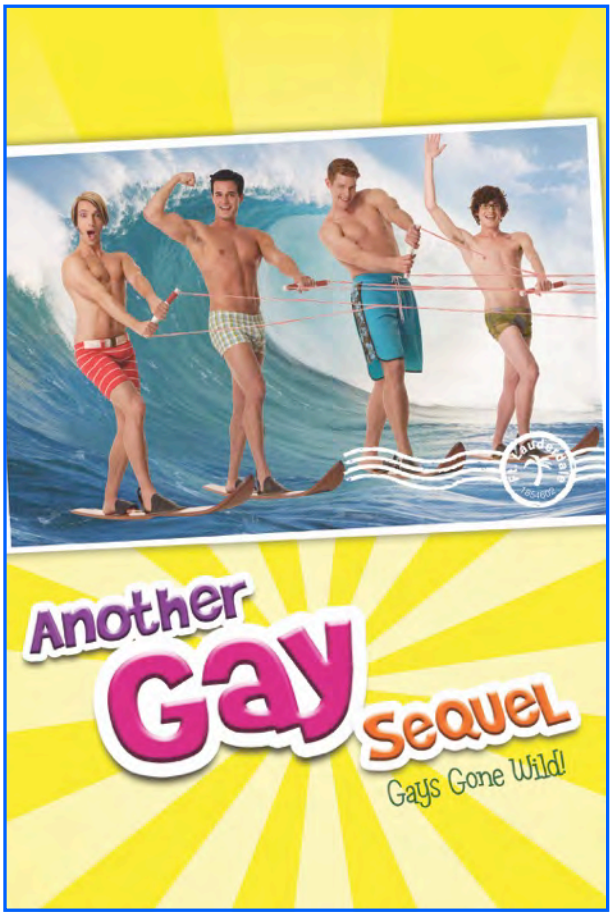
**MB: Jarod and Griff bring monogamy and relationship anxiety into an anything-goes Spring Break. Why include that tension?**

***TS:*** Because hooking up, monogamy—whatever works for you—is valid. Amid all the insanity, the guys learn that there isn't just one "right" way to be gay.




**MB: The Perez Hilton subplot feels especially surreal in hindsight. How do you view it now?**

***TS:*** Gossip culture was at its peak when we made the film. This was pre-smartphone—people got their gossip on laptops. Now it's constant and inescapable. And it's not just celebrities anymore. With Instagram and TikTok, we're consuming everyone's lives—friends and strangers alike. One thing I love about the film is that nostalgia. It takes us back to a less complicated time when gossip felt more contained.

**MB: The cameo roster—RuPaul, Scott Thompson, Willam, Colton Ford—feels even more iconic today. Did any casting feel risky at the time?**

***TS:*** Casting porn actors in non-porn roles was considered risky then. I never understood why those worlds had to be separate. I believed those performers could absolutely deliver in mainstream roles. I'm so glad we cast Brent and Colton—those performances are legendary now. Brent as Stan the Merman still blows me away. He's this beautiful, magical creature. I'm proud we didn't draw a line between "porn" and "non-porn" actors. We simply cast the best person for the role.

**MB: The film's refusal to sanitize queer sexuality was bold and controversial. Does it still feel subversive?**

***TS:*** I think it absolutely does. No one is really making outrageous, politically incorrect, no-holds-barred spoofs anymore. There used to be so many comedies that were wrong in the best possible way. This movie crosses the line—just like the films

that inspired it. Today, comedians and filmmakers are more cautious, worried about being canceled. I recently looked at the reviews on Letterboxd and laughed—people call it the worst thing they've ever seen but still give it ten stars. It's a love-it-or-hate-it movie. And even the people who hate it laugh. That's why I made it.

**MB: With this re-release introducing the film to a new generation, what do you hope younger viewers take away?**

***TS:*** I hope they're inspired by a world before smartphones—when people went to queer resorts, bars, and safe spaces to form real community. So many of those spaces are disappearing. The resort where we shot, the Shubert, is now straight. Every queer resort we filmed at is gone. That's heartbreaking. So my message is: support queer businesses. Meet people in real life. Build community; sexually or otherwise. That messy, loud, joyful connection is what this film celebrates most.

*photo by Christopher Stephens*

***Another Gay Sequel: Gays Gone Wild! is now available on all major streaming platforms.***

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# GRAB THOMAS

Photo By Felix Goncalves

## The Golden Age of Thomas Dolby

**By Gregg Shapiro**

It's hard to believe that "The Golden Age of Wireless," the debut album by musician **Thomas Dolby** was released more than 40 years ago. Regardless of its vintage, it still sounds as fresh and appealing as the day it hit record store shelves. A versatile artist who lists Joni Mitchell, Lene Lovich, Prefab Sprout, and Foreigner among his many collaborators, Dolby is the definition of someone who plays well with other. Dolby, who is embarking on a multi-city international concert tour, including several U.S. dates, graciously made time for an interview before hitting the road. **[Thomas Dolby performs on April 20 at House of Blues.]**

**Gregg Shapiro: Your 1982 major-label debut album, "The Golden Age of Wireless," was rereleased in 1983 to include the hit single "She Blinded Me With Science." Were you prepared for the reception that both the single and the album received?**
***Thomas Dolby:*** Totally unprepared. I never really saw myself as a mainstream act, so it was pretty amusing when suddenly I was in the mainstream. I've always been a bit of an introvert, a bit of a social hermit. I went from wallflower to the center of attention in a very short space of time. I viewed it with amusement more than anything. It never really overwhelmed me. I wasn't particularly into hedonism, partying, being the rock star figure. I never really got wrapped up in that stuff. I just found it creatively very stimulating because I started to get the most amazing offers of different projects. Musically, it was the beginning of a fascinating journey.

**GS: Your debut coincided with the early years of MTV, and the "She Blinded Me With Science" video was seen by viewers on a regular basis. How do you feel about your impact on the music video genre?**
***TD:*** I think MTV was crucial for me, really. My album came out, won awards, got great reviews, and sold about three copies. The excuse given by the American (record) label was, "Well, you're a little bit hard to pigeonhole for radio programmers. Your stuff is kind of funky, kind of punky, but you're a white dude. Although MTV was accused of homogenizing its playlist. It was actually, in the early '80s, a lot more diverse than most American radio was. They didn't really care what genre of music they were playing, so long as it had a great video. As MTV got into the major markets, it was thrilling for audiences. Cool people were staying home on a Saturday night to watch MTV instead of going out to clubs and gigs. As the viewership ticked up, radio stations had to take notice of what MTV was playing, because that's what people were calling in and asking for. Suddenly, the radio situation was reversed for me, and I was getting a lot of play across different genres of radio. Dance clubs were opening up, as well. I guess I was ambushing the public. It was a crest of a wave for the sort of new British invasion. Catchy song and catchy image, and

it just worked. It all came together.

**GS: While we're on the subject of radio, presently your music is in regular rotation on Sirius XM's First Wave station, where you continue to reach the fans who have been with you from the start, as well as younger people who might have been unfamiliar with your music. Do you recall how you felt the first time you heard one of your songs played on the radio?**
***TD:*** It wasn't really an overnight thing because, as a keyboard player, as a writer and producer, I had some success before. I was very surprised when Foreigner asked me to play on their album "4." When "Waiting For a Girl Like You" was a hit with this sort of dreamy synth intro that I made, suddenly, that was getting on mainstream radio. So, I heard that. I wrote "New Toy" for Lene Lovich, and that was a big hit in the UK. We were on "Top of the Pops," and things like that. It had been a gradual thing. But I think the difference with "She Blinded Me With Science" was that I created it in my own brand.

**GS: Out musician Adele Bertei performed with you on the song "Hyperactive," from your second album, "The Flat Earth," and queer musician Gail Ann Dorsey is currently touring with you. How aware are you of an LGBTQ following for your music?**
***TD:*** I'm not sure if, in the early days, it was that easy to put your finger on. I think that the gay community, in the early '80s, still had its own clubs, its own bars, its own lifestyle, which then, as we know, was decimated in the mid '80s. I wasn't aware of being a darling of that particular demographic the way, let's say, Bette Midler might have been [laughs] or somebody like Barbra Streisand. I think the appeal of my music crossed barriers. When I went to see Prince in the early days, I was amazed by the age, the race, the proclivities of his audience; it was right across the map. I think queer was a good way to describe his audience in those days. I certainly didn't put any labels on anything. But through the history of people I've played with, you mentioned a couple, there's a lot of LGBTQ people right there. In my own family, there's a lot, as well. I have three kids. The eldest is trans, the middle one is a lesbian, and the youngest is a drummer. When my eldest kid transitioned – his name now is Harper, and he's 35 – but he transitioned in his late teens. That was before there were a lot of high-profile trans people. We were living in the UK at the time, and he was an activist and very much a mentor for other kids and their families. He felt very fortunate that his parents were very progressive; that we supported him. At the time when he started down this path, we were living in San Francisco. So straight, vanilla people were in the minority there [laughs]. Then we went to the UK, and he went on BBC morning TV to talk about his experience, to help other kids, and so on. I started to get social media comments saying, "Right on! Great that you're supportive." People would start to notice things in my songs; they'd pick up on lyrical things. Even before my son transitioned, I had a song called "Simone" that was about a trans person.

Photo By Felix Goncalves

**GS: Thank you so much for that. Are there contemporary artists to whom you feel like you could draw a through line from you to them?**
***TD:*** A few years ago, there was synthwave. I think that for those artists, I was one of the influences for them. I think it's more to do with songwriting than genre, if anything. Over the years, when new artists have emerged, I've thought, "Oh, I bet they used to listen to me when they were young [laughs." In fact, I had rather a nice surprise a year or two ago when I was listening to a podcast that was made by Billie Eilish's dad, Patrick O'Connell. Billie came on, and she said, "Dad, what was that weird stuff you used to play us when you took us on camping trips?" He said, "Oh, you mean Thomas Dolby?" (She said), "Yeah, put some of that on." Billie Eilish starts singing along with my songs, "The guy is so good, but it's so weird!" I think that she and Finneas were a little bit influenced by their dad, who was a big fan, sort of ramming the songs down their throats when they went on long camping trips.

**GS: That's so cool! There seems to be more conversations about AI every day. Do you have concerns about AI with music, and if so, what are they?**
***TD:*** I'm a glass-half-full kind of guy. Technological advances and musical artistic advances have always sort of

gone hand in hand, or at least leapfrogged each other. It's exciting when new, creative technology comes along. I'm not the doomsayer that says, “This is going to mean the end of everything.” I can remember sitting in a musicians’ union meeting in London in about 1982 at which the agenda was: the union shall ban synthesizers forever because they're taking jobs away from real musicians. The motion passed, but there were a handful of us that's stood up and made impassioned speeches. Being able to get my hands on synthesizers early on was really a substitute for…I think my music is quite orchestral in many ways. I think I'm sort of a frustrated orchestral, classical composer [laughs]. A synth was a way for me to get into the organic nature of symphonic arrangement. As opposed to some of my contemporaries, who leaned into the inherent coldness and mechanism of synths. Kraftwerk, Gary Numan, The Human League, etc. That stuff is great, and I touched on that. But I think more often I would use synths and samplers to create these imaginative soundscapes and cinematic textures. Maybe not my radio hits, but the deeper cuts on my albums are very personal. Use the sounds as a way to take you inside my brain.

**GS: You’re an artist with a long history of live performance and have released a few live albums over the years. Now, you’re embarking on this 2026 tour, which includes U.S. dates, as well as several UK dates. In what ways would you say U.S. audiences differ from those in the UK, and in what ways do you think they are similar, if at all?**
***TD*:** It's interesting; I feel somewhat exposed when I go back to the UK. I don't think this is entirely justified, but British people are very proud of the originality and authenticity that they ascribe to their homegrown talent. The ruse in all of this is that actually what we're great at, and have been great at for centuries, is going out in the world, finding the spices and the rare gems and minerals, and bringing them home, wrapping them up, putting a new spin on them, and then re-exporting them to the rest of the world.
**GS: Are you describing a kind of musical colonialism?**
***TD:*** Totally! I think there's very little true, indigenous, British pop music. Whether it was the blues, reggae, African music, electro, house, dance, techno from Detroit and DC – we would go out, and we'd snag the best bits, bring it home, and put a new Carnaby Street spin on it and then sell it back to the rest of the world. The British are actually quite snooty about anybody who does that openly. They prefer it if you grew up in the projects and every morning before you even have brewed your first cup of tea, you jotted off a couple of lyrics to new indie songs [laughs]. Like Morrissey or somebody like that. It's not to say there's none. Prefab Sprout, who I worked with. I think Paddy McAloon is a true national treasure. But there's not many of him. There's a lot of roots in American music that is truly original, albeit with a heritage of African, Cuban, whatever. I think there’s more true indigenous music in the States between jazz, funk, R&B, and rap and all the rest.

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Charlie's

# Q-Music: Vinyl variety for the spring

**By Gregg Shapiro**

*Pansy Division*

Here's a fascinating fact about San Francisco-based queercore band **Pansy Division**. In 1994, at the time of the release of Pansy Division's second album, "Deflowered," newly reissued on limited edition deep red vinyl by Sounds Rad, Pansy Division was invited to open for Green Day on the latter's tour in support of its major-label debut "Dookie." At that time, Pansy Division was signed to the Northern California-based indie Lookout, the same label that released Green Day's 1992 album "Kerplunk!" How's that for queer musical history?

Pansy Division's "Deflowered" arrived a year after the band made a splash with its debut album "Undressed." Performed in the band's trademark power-punk style, with most of the songs written by co-founding members Jon Ginoli and Chris Freeman, the songs mix humor and commentary, capturing the zeitgeist of the time. Originals "Groovy Underwear," "Fluffy City," "Denny" (based on a poem by gay writer Trebor Healey), "Deep Water," and "Beercan Boy" (yes, it's about what you think) are all recommended, as are the fantastic covers of Jonathan Richman's "A Song of Remembrance for Old Boyfriends" (with the genders changed), and the late Pete Shelley's "Homosapien." **[Pansy Division performs at Beat Kitchen in Chicago on May 16.]**

By 1975, much of Elton John's artistic output, including "Tumbleweed Connection," "Madman Across the Water," "Honky Chateau," and "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road," had not only been greeted enthusiastically by critics but also by fans who were eager to accept his musical genius combined with his antics. Then he stumbled slightly with "Caribou," which, while containing classics such as "Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me" and "The Bitch is Back," felt like a letdown. Then he, and longtime collaborator Bernie Taupin, pulled out all the stops and delivered what, to this day, is considered his masterpiece. The first album to debut in the top spot of the "Billboard 200" at the time of its release, "Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy" (UMe/Rocket/EMI), has been reissued in a 50th anniversary edition, available on double LP colored vinyl, as well as double CD and digital, including unreleased demos and 2005 live recordings. Remember, this album came out in the same year as Patti Smith's "Horses" and Joni Mitchell's "The Hissing of Summer Lawns," to give you an idea of what was happening in music at that time. While "Captain Fantastic…" yielded only one hit single (the breathtaking "Someone Saved My Life Tonight"), there's not a dud to be found, with the title cut, "Bitter Fingers," the rocking "(Gotta Get A) Meal Ticket," the blue-eyed soul of "Tell Me When The Whistle Blows," and the high drama of album closer "Curtains," worthy of mention.

*Elton John and Bernie Taupin*

None of the members of the popular 1980s British synthpop act **Thompson Twins** is named Thompson (they are, in fact, Tom Bailey, Alannah Currie, and Joe Leeway). Additionally, there were no twins present in the trio. The good news is that none of those things impeded Thompson Twins from making great music and creating unforgettable hit singles. "Industry & Seduction" (BMG) is a double LP (one green and one orange) testament to that. The 20 songs represent what Thompson Twins did best: crafting timeless electropop that sounds as good today as it did

*KT Tunstall*

40 or more years ago. In addition to songs featured in movies, “If You Were Here”( from “Sixteen Candles”) and “Nothing In Common” (from the Tom Hanks movie of the same name), all the classics are here, including “In The Name of Love,” “Love On Your Side,” “Lies,” “You Take Me Up,” “Hold Me Now,” “Doctor! Doctor!,” and “Lay Your Hands on Me.”

Believe it or not, **KT Tunstall**’s debut album, “Eye to the Telescope” (BMG), newly reissued in an expanded edition on double LP (one pink and one blue), was released 20 years ago. Containing a trio of stateside hit singles, “Suddenly I See,” “Black Horse and the Cherry Tree” and “Other Side of the World,” it was a wonderful introduction to a talented singer/songwriter who continues to release albums, with the most recent one coming out in 2023. The reissue expands on the original by 12(!) songs, including nine live recordings, as well as three previously unreleased tracks. **[KT Tunstall performs at Huntington Bank Pavilion at Northerly Island on September 6.]**

You might not expect it, but even suburban Chicago’s very own emo band **Fall Out Boy** has a queer connection. The band’s lyricist, Pete Wentz (the hottest of the Fall Out Boys), teamed up with gay entrepreneur Stephen Westman when he first opened his Clandestine Industries store in Chicago’s Wrigleyville neighborhood (mere steps from the Halsted Street gayborhood), with clothing designed by Wentz. Now you know! Fall Out Boy is also celebrating an anniversary, the 20th of its major label debut “From Under the Cork Tree” (Island/ UMe). Available as a triple LP deluxe box (in addition to a double CD deluxe box with an abundance of bonus material and all sorts of visual goodies), “…Cork Tree” is in true emo spirit, addressing personal (and personality) struggles with pop-punk energy, exemplified by hit singles “Dance, Dance” and “Sugar, We’re Going Down,” and with titles such as "I Slept With Someone In Fall Out Boy And All I Got Was This Stupid Song Written About Me,” “Sophomore Slump Or Comeback Of The Year,” “Champagne For My Real Friends, Real Pain For My Sham Friends.”

## PRIDECHICAGO ANNOUNCES 2026 THEME "FREE TO BE PROUD" AND COMMUNITY GRAND MARSHALS

PRIDEChicago – the all-volunteer organization behind the iconic Chicago Pride Parade, today announces the official theme of the 2026 Chicago Pride Parade, Free to Be Proud, along with the selection of its 2026 Community Grand Marshals — leaders whose lives and work reflect the movement's enduring commitment to freedom, visibility, justice, and community.

For more than five decades, the Chicago Pride Parade has stood as both a celebration and a declaration. In 2026, Free to Be Proud reclaims Pride's founding purpose — affirming that the freedom to live openly, love authentically, and exist safely is neither abstract nor guaranteed. It is something that must be protected, defended, and shared.

"Free to Be Proud is declarative," said Tim Frye, longtime parade co-coordinator and vice chair of PRIDEChicago. "It reflects both how far our community has come and the work that remains. Pride has always been about more than celebration — it's about visibility, advocacy, and the pursuit of justice for all."

The theme honors the legacy of those who paved the way — from the early activists to generations of LGBTQ+ Chicagoans who transformed courage into community. It also speaks directly to the present moment, when hard-won freedoms continue to face challenges and the need for solidarity is more urgent than ever.

### *2026 Community Grand Marshals*

The 2026 Community Grand Marshals were selected for their extraordinary leadership, service, and impact — each embodying what it means to be Free to Be Proud.

***Tracy Baim*** has been named a 2026 Community Grand Marshal for her decades of work documenting LGBTQ + life and activism in Chicago and beyond. A journalist and historian, Baim is executive director of Press Forward Chicago and co-founder and owner of Windy City Times. Her leadership and contributions have earned multiple lifetime achievement honors, including inductions into the Chicago Headline Club, the Chicago Journalists Association, the Association for Women Journalists–Chicago Hall of Fame, and the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame. Baim is also a co-founder of Pride Action Tank and the Illinois LGBT Chamber of Commerce, served as co–vice chair of Gay Games VII in Chicago, and founded the March on Springfield for Marriage Equality in 2013. Baim has authored or edited 14 books preserving LGBTQ+ history.

***Mona Noriega*** has been named a 2026 Community Grand Marshal for her decades of leadership advancing civil rights and equity. A Chicago-born Chicana lesbian and mother of two, Noriega serves on the board of Equality Illinois. Her career includes opening the Midwest office of Lambda Legal, serving as its Midwest director. Noriega was appointed by Gov. J.B. Pritzker to serve as chair of the Illinois Commission on Human Rights from 2021 to 2024, and previously served as commissioner and board chair of the City of Chicago's Commission on Human Relations under Mayors Rahm Emanuel and Lori Lightfoot. During her tenure, civil rights protections were expanded under Chicago's anti-discrimination ordinances. She holds master's degrees from the University of Illinois Chicago and was inducted into the Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame in 2002 alongside her wife, Evette Cardona.

***Evette Cardona*** has also been named a 2026 Community Grand Marshal for her long career in philanthropy and community leadership. A Puerto Rican lesbian and native Chicagoan, Cardona retired in May 2025 from the Polk Bros. Foundation after 27 years, most recently serving as vice president of programs.A graduate of the University of Chicago's Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice, Cardona has received multiple honors for leadership and professional achievement and has taught courses in philanthropy and public policy. She is a co-founder of Women of All Colors and Cultures Together and Amigas Latinas and was a founding

board member of Center on Halsted. She continues to serve on the steering committees of Chicago Latines in Philanthropy and the Illinois Immigration Funders Collaborative.

***The Alliance of Illinois Judges*** (AIJ) has been named a 2026 Community Grand Marshal in recognition of its mission to defend and advance the independence of the judiciary, and promote and encourage respect and unbiased treatment for LGBTQ individuals as they relate to the judiciary, the legal profession, and the administration of justice. The AIJ's current president, Judge Jill Rose Quinn, is Illinois's first openly transgender judge and elected official. Her leadership underscores the importance of visibility and meaningful representation within our courts and communities.

**A Yearlong Call to Action**

**Free to Be Proud** is intentionally participatory, inviting individuals and organizations to reflect what freedom means to them — Free to Be Seen. Free to Be Loved. Free to Be Safe. Free to Be Proud. The theme will serve as a yearlong campaign, connecting the parade to broader advocacy, storytelling, and community engagement.

As one of the oldest and largest Pride parades in the country — welcoming nearly one million spectators and more than 15,000 participants annually — the Chicago Pride Parade remains a powerful reminder that Pride exists because freedom has always been worth fighting for.

**55 Years of Pride**

The 55th annual Chicago Pride Parade steps off at 11 a.m. (CST) on Sunday, June 28, 2026 in Chicago's landmark LGBTQ+ Northalsted neighborhood.

For updates, participation details, and opportunities to support the Chicago Pride Parade, visit ***http://www.pridechicago.org.***

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Photo by Hassan Rasul

# Black, Queer, and in Love

## 'Almost Us' Is the Spring Rom-Com We've Been Waiting For

**By John Stein**

With humor, chemistry, and heart, Almost Us explores what happens when desire collides with power—and when love becomes inseparable from legacy and community survival.

Premiering April 17 on Watch VIM, the new romantic comedy from filmmaker Anthony Bawn opens with a fiery one-night stand between Darren, a closeted and politically connected real estate developer, and Jason, an openly queer and charismatic community organizer.

What begins as a moment of passion soon becomes far more complicated when Darren's luxury redevelopment project threatens the Baldwin Cultural Center, a beloved sanctuary and organizing hub for Phoenix's marginalized communities.

"There are awkward run-ins and plenty of laughs along the way," says Bawn, who also stars as Jason. "The connection between Darren and Jason forces them to face what they've both been avoiding: the difference between wanting someone and being willing to be seen with them."

Speaking from his Phoenix-based studio, Bawn shared more about the film, his streaming platform, and the personal experiences that helped shape Almost Us.

**John Stein: What inspired you to launch your own streaming platform, Watch VIM?**

***Anthony Bawn:*** What inspired me to launch Watch VIM was the need for ownership and access. I got tired of creating stories and always feeling like we had to wait for permission from someone else to be seen. I wanted to build a home for original content, independent films, and voices that don't always get prioritized by the larger platforms. Watch VIM became bigger than just streaming. It's about creating opportunity, visibility, and a space where our stories can live on our own terms.

**JS: How extensive is the Watch VIM catalog right now?**

***AB:*** We have a growing catalog of films and series, and a strong portion of that content comes directly from my own productions and projects developed under VIM. A lot of what's on the platform reflects the kind of stories I care deeply about telling: character-driven, emotional, bold, and rooted in communities that deserve more screen time. At the same time, the goal is to keep expanding so the platform becomes a home for other filmmakers who need a place to showcase their work.

**JS: What inspired the story behind Almost Us?**

***AB:*** Almost Us was inspired by the emotional gray areas in love—relationships that feel real, deep, and meaningful but still somehow never fully become what you hoped they would. I wanted to explore timing, vulnerability, fear, and connection, especially through the lens of Black queer men, in a way that felt honest but still entertaining. It's a romance comedy, but underneath there's a lot of heart. It's really about the tension between what we say we want and what we're actually ready for.

**JS: The Baldwin Cultural Center plays an important role in the film. What do spaces like that mean to you personally?**
***AB:*** Community centers represent safety, connection, and possibility. They're places where people can show up as they are, find resources, build relationships, and feel seen. That's especially important in communities where people may not always feel supported at home, at work, or in society in general. Including that in the film was intentional because those spaces really do matter. They can be the beginning of healing, growth, friendship, and even love.

**JS: At its core, the film asks what people are willing to risk for love. Is that something you personally relate to?**
***AB:*** Absolutely—100 percent. There are so many moments in life where you know what you want, but going after it means being honest, vulnerable, and sometimes risking comfort, relationships, or the version of yourself people are used to. As a creative, as a business owner, and just as a person, I've had to make decisions that required faith and courage. So that theme is very personal to me.

**JS: Have you ever dated someone like Darren—or do you see a little bit of him in yourself?**
***AB:*** I think most people have either met a Darren, loved a Darren, or at some point been a little like Darren themselves. Fortunately for me, my husband was the first guy I dated—and I married him! (Laughs.) That's a whole other story. What makes Darren interesting is that he's layered. He may care deeply, but he's also dealing with his own fears, walls, and emotional timing. I can understand parts of that because none of us are perfect when it comes to love.

**JS: What do you hope audiences take away from the film?**
***AB:*** More than anything, I hope audiences walk away feeling something real. I want them to laugh, reflect, and maybe even see themselves in the story. I hope the film reminds people that love is complicated, timing matters, and honesty with yourself is just as important as honesty with someone else. On a bigger level, I hope Almost Us shows that Black queer love—along with the joy, confusion, and vulnerability that come with it—deserves to be centered on screen in a full and honest way.

***Almost Us premieres April 17 exclusively on Watch VIM.***

**FASHIONBAR ANNOUNCES THE TRANS MEDIA FASHION SHOW APRIL 24**

FASHIONBAR THE SHOWS

FashionBar LLC presents The Trans Media Fashion Show, taking place Friday, April 24, 2026, from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM at Water Tower Place (Level 3) on Chicago's Magnificent Mile. As part of FashionBar The Shows: April 2026, this powerful evening celebrates transgender and non-binary people walking the runway bringing the Chicago Fashion Industry diversity and visibility with authentic storytelling through fashion & media.

The Trans Media Fashion Show is a visual representation of designer brands engaging with the LGBTAIQ demoraphic and aligning their designer clothing lifestyle brands with a fashion runway presentation and honoring individuality and identity to a marginalized community of people in today's turbulent world.

Be part of the change needed to elevate transgender and nonbinary lives, as we kick off the night with a red carpet experience, lite bites and beverages scheduled to begin at 6:00 PM at Water Tower Place on Chicago's magnificent mile! We welcome press, media, buyers, editors, stylists, influencers, VIPs, and community leaders to join our ground-breaking runway presentation.

Featured Designers include Life is Work, Brown Elephant, FashionBar Sustainable and Haley from 3rd Period — each bringing distinct creative perspectives rooted in culture, sustainability, empowerment, and advocacy.
Non-Profit Partnership

The Trans Media Fashion Show proudly benefits Howard Brown Health, including support for the Broadway Youth Center (BYC). Founded in 1974, Howard Brown Health is one of the nation's largest LGBTQ+ health centers, providing comprehensive, affirming care and advancing health equity for all.

For tickets and additional information, visit:
**http://www.fashionbartheshows.com**

*Photos By*
*Anthony Meade*

KIT KAT
CLUB

# GRAB BROGAN

## Brogan is the Dom of Your Kinky Dreams

**By Michael Werth**

Before he was headlining films on KinkMen like Make Daddy Proud, Brogan was a self-described "good Midwest boy" growing up in Minnesota. He was athletic, quiet, and far more likely to be found on a hockey rink than in front of a camera. He followed the rules, stuck to "the plan," and even built a successful corporate sales career in New York City. But when the pandemic upended his carefully mapped-out life, Brogan found himself at an unexpected crossroads. What began as a creative outlet—gogo dancing, stripping, and modeling on the side—quickly evolved into a bold reinvention. Launching his OnlyFans during lockdown meant embracing a path he couldn't walk back from, but it also opened the door to a thriving career in adult entertainment.

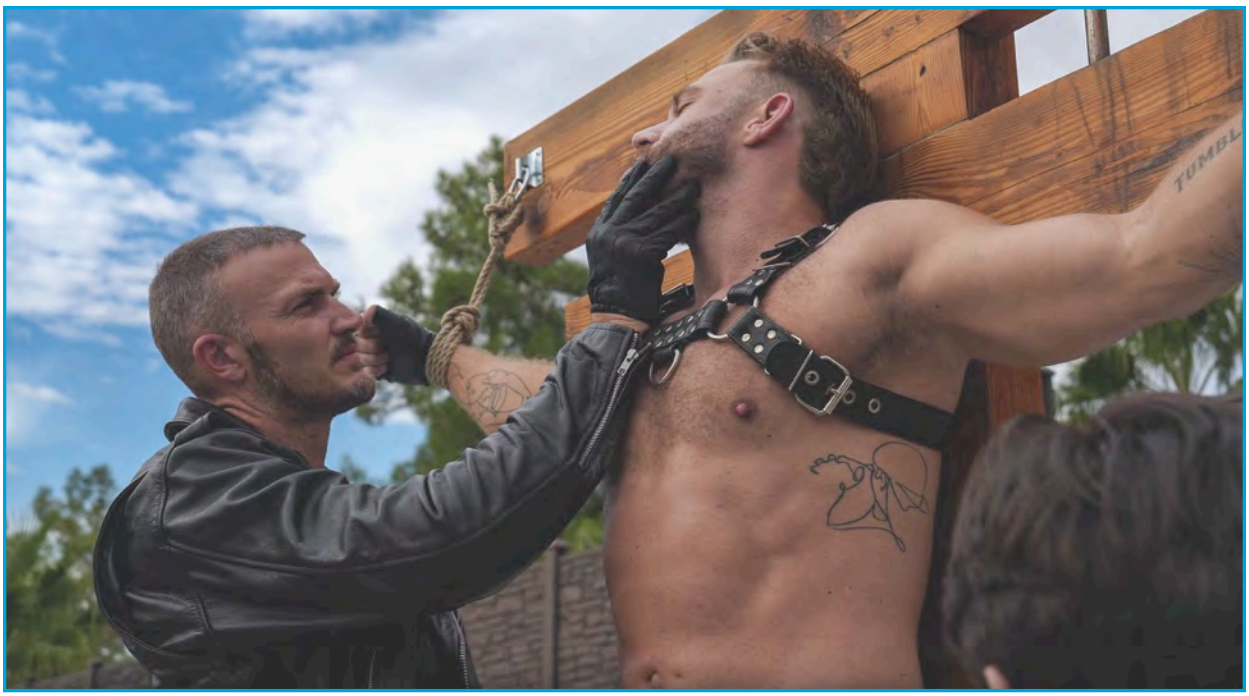
**Michael Werth: How did you discover the adult film world and what made you say, "Yeah, this might actually be for me"?**
***Brogan:*** I first discovered KinkMen and their Bound Gods videos when I was in college. Thank God my freshman roommate had a fiancé and was always at her apartment instead of our dorm room. I had endless hours to doom scroll and I found myself in some darker corners of the porn world, and something just felt right to me. I felt like I understood it.

**MW: Kink means different things to different people. How do you define it?**
***Brogan***: For me, it's that feeling of taboo. Now, let's be honest, what someone with no experience in kink feels is taboo will probably be very different than what I feel is taboo today. But I don't think it's my place to tell someone, "Oh, no that's not kink. What you're doing isn't enough. You don't belong here." That's definitely not what kink is about, and for me its ALL about exploring and finding your boundaries and trying new things, and maybe even pushing those boundaries to test out what happens when you push just a little further past "taboo." It's having that feeling and then also being given permission to go further when you're ready for it.

**MW: What do you enjoy most about working in fetish films?**
***Brogan:*** My scenes and my experiences with my scene partners are never the same. There's no set destination, there's no right or wrong way for the scene to play out. We communicate, we negotiate, we make a plan, and then get to share in this really unique time together that hopefully we come out of feeling really incredible about.

**MW: Do you have a favorite KinkMen film?**
***Brogan:*** I have two that are really special for me. Outside of performing, I have real-life dominant-submissive relationships with Apollo FFates and Wyld Ryder, and I've gotten to bring those connections from my personal life into the Bound Gods dungeon and share that with the fans, and those both felt really special to me. I know that sounds actually sort of sweet and really nice, but personally, I also have a huge humiliation kink with my submissives, so getting to take our play and bring it to a larger platform and audience to show them off in that way really just intensifies those scenes for me.

**MW: Has exploring kink helped you learn anything unexpected about yourself or your boundaries?**
***Brogan:*** As I've delved further into the kink community, it's really helped me work through some psycho-sexual hang ups I had been holding onto about my sex life. It's given me the freedom to enjoy a much



wider field of options for my sexual pleasure.

**MW: How important are communication and consent in kink?**
***Brogan:*** I think the single most important thing that people need to know is that nothing in the kink and fetish world happens without consent, even in consensual non-consent role-play. I don't want to do any of this with someone who isn't enthusiastic about doing it with me. Communication and agreement are key, and if there isn't consent, then what you're talking about isn't kink anymore.

**MW: What's a misconception people often have about kink?**
***Brogan:*** One that I really have a hard time with is that if you're into things like impact play, humiliation, or consensual non-consent, that you must be a violent person, or get off on real world sexual violence, or something like that. I get a ton of DMs from people making some pretty extreme accusations about what an evil and abusive person I must be, and meanwhile, I'm sitting on my couch building Legos and watching Star Wars on a Friday night.

**MW: Legos?**
***Brogan:*** I'm really just a big nerd. Building Legos and taking care of my plants are the things that really help me find peace in all the chaos of the world. I won't even say that I love working out and being at the gym. I don't.

**MW: What else do people get wrong about you?**
***Brogan:*** That I'm ONLY into really intense kink sex. I've had a number of guys turn me down because they think I'm too intense. For me, great connection makes great sex, even if it's not kinky sex. And sometimes that great connection means something a little slower, gentler, romantic. If the connection is there, then I'm always game.

**MW: For the kink curious, what's your advice?**
***Brogan:*** Don't be intimidated. Everything about this stuff seems intimidating, I totally get that. Even the guy with a full closet for his leather and latex and toys remembers what it felt like to dip his toe in for the first time. When you're observing from the outside, there's a lot of aggression and intensity, and it's totally understandable to think that's just how kink and fetish people are all the time. But there's a whole different side of all of this that is about community building and connection and welcoming people in. And if you can find any type of group to connect with and get involved with, online or in person, I think you will be so surprised at how welcoming people are.

***For more of Brogan visit KinkMen.com***

# GRAB A PLANE

## GayDays Orlando June 4-8, 2026

GayDays has officially confirmed that the 2026 event will move forward as scheduled, June 4–8, following a brief planning pause earlier this year. Organizers announced a renewed event format designed to deliver a more immersive and community-focused experience, including exclusive use of the entire host hotel.

For 2026, all guest rooms, event spaces, and amenities will be reserved exclusively for GayDays attendees, creating a private environment where the LGBTQ+ community can gather, celebrate, and connect throughout the weekend.

"We took the time to make the right decision for our community and for the future of GayDays," said Josh Duke, co-owner of GayDays. "This year, the entire property will be dedicated to our guests, creating the immersive, adult-focused experience people have been asking for."

All official programming will move forward as planned, including:

•Daytime pool parties and social events

• Nightly entertainment and DJ experiences

• The GayDays Vendor Expo and community marketplace

• Mr. GayDays and Miss GayDays Pageants

• VIP experiences and hosted activities

• The Red Room late-night environment

• Specialty entertainment and adult-themed programming

By hosting the entire event within a single, fully dedicated property, organizers say the 2026 format will create a more connected atmosphere and address feedback from previous years.

"Our goal was to bring the community back together under one roof," said ***Charles Cantrell,*** co-owner and event partner. "This structure allows guests to stay where the action is and enjoy a welcoming space created specifically for them. It's a more focused, more intentional GayDays experience."

Organizers also confirmed that the longstanding tradition of Red Shirt Day at Walt Disney World on Saturday will continue as part of the GayDays weekend. While GayDays operates independently from Disney, thousands of guests are expected to participate in the tradition of visiting the parks wearing red.

The earlier planning pause allowed organizers time to evaluate options and secure a structure that supports both the guest experience and the long-term stability of the event.

"We didn't want to move forward unless we knew we could deliver the experience our community expects," Cantrell added. "Now that everything is in place, our focus is on bringing people together and making 2026 a strong return."

Founded in the early 1990s, GayDays is one of the longest-running LGBTQ+ gatherings in Central Florida, welcoming thousands of visitors each year for a weekend of connection, entertainment, and community.

Event details, reservations, and updates are available at: ***http://www.GayDays.com***

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# FASHIONBAR

## THE SHOWS

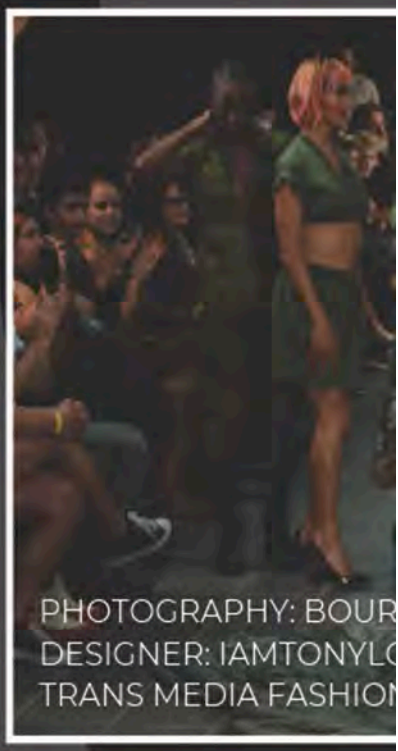
**THE TRANS MEDIA FASHION SHOW**
**FRIDAY, APRIL 24TH 2026** 6:00PM TO 9:00PM

**THE COLLECTIVE RUNWAY SHOW**
**SATURDAY, APRIL 25TH 2026** 5:00PM TO 9:00PM

**THE SHOE SHOW**
**PRESENTED BY THE MARY E SMITH FOUNDATION**
**& EVENING WEAR COLLECTIONS**
**SUNDAY, APRIL 26TH 2026 -** 3:00PM - 6:00PM

← SCAN FOR TICKETS!

LOCATION: WATER TOWER PLACE (LEVEL 3, FASHIONBAR)



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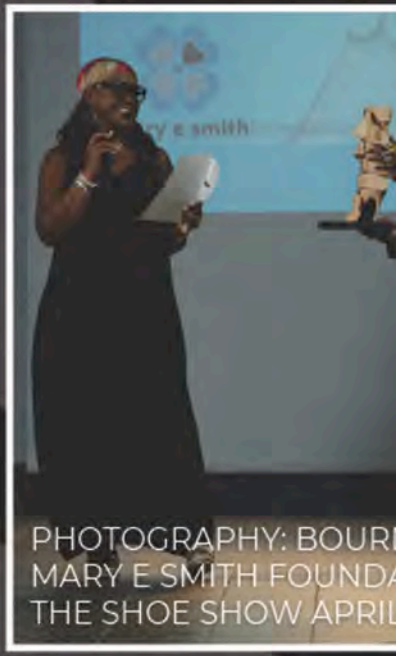

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THE SHOE SHOW APRIL

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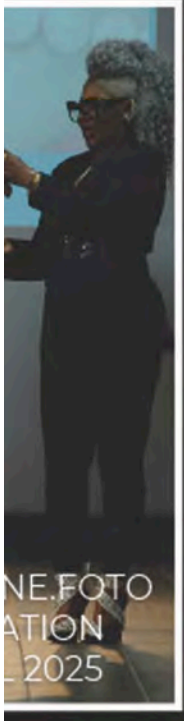

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# GRAB YOUR FRIENDS

Daily Specials;

**MONDAY**

***2 Bears Tavern Uptown:*** $5 Stoli Cocktails (Any Flavors), EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts***.@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 1pm-2am. ***Charlies:*** Half off Hennessy and Patron 7pm - 11pm ABC Bingo, 11pm Charlie's Live. ***Hydrate:*** Lips and Mascara Doors at 8pm Show at 10pm. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $5 Well Drinks.***Shakers on Clark:*** Comedy Night $1 off Well Drinks and Well Shots. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, Musical Monday Show Tunes 8pm-2am. ***Steamworks:*** Every 3rd Monday TM4M (Trans Men For Men) 8pm-2am. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 Whiskeys, Ryes & Bourbons, $5 Tecate Tallboys, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 5pm-4am. Horny Bastards A Night for those who just didn't get enough over the weekend.

**TUESDAY**

***2 Bears Tavern Uptown:*** $3 House Shots, $5 Miller Lite Drafts, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts***@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Game Night with Tony. ***Cell Block:*** Open 1pm-2am. ***Charlie's:*** $4 You Call It's 5pm - 9pm, 7pm - 11pm BS Karaoke, 11pm Baddies Block Party. ***Hydrate:*** TatTuesday XXL Doors open at 8pm. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Happy Hour 4-6pm $8 WINE, $9 APPS, $10 Martinis. Live Instrumentalists. ***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. Open auditions for male dancers 7pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $3 House Shots, $5 Miller Lite Drafts, $5 Premium Well Cocktails, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $5 Canned Beers, Seltzers & Ciders. ***Shakers on Clark:*** $3 Domestic Beers. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, Trivia Tuesday 8-10pm, TRL Tuesday: Totally Rad Line-up of 90's-to-Now Music Videos 10pm-2am, OUTspoken LGBTQ+ Storytelling 1st Tuesday of the month from 7-9pm. ***Steamworks:*** Every Tuesday 4 pm – 4 am Guys Under 25 Get In Free* (*Free 30 day membership and free locker). ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts ***Touche:*** Open 5pm - 4am.Hardcore Cruisin' No Cell Phones/Wifi, 6-9pm $3 Well Drinks $1 Off call-imports, $3 PBR/Rolling Rock.. 3/24 March Madness Begins!

**WEDNESDAY**

***2 Bears Tavern Uptown:*** $5 Premium Well Cocktails, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts. ***Cell Block:*** Open 1pm-2am. ***Charlie's:*** $4 You Call it's 5pm - 9pm, 7pm - 11pm SCCDA Country Dancing, 11pm Boys and Booze. ***Jackhammer:*** $4 Premium Well Cocktails, $3 House Shots, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pool & Darts. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Happy Hour 4-6pm $8 WINE, $9 APPS, $10 Martinis. Live Broadway Vocalists. ***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open at 6pm Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $4 Miller Lite Drafts, $5 Stoli Cocktails (All Flavors), EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am $5 Lagunitas Draft & Cans. ***Shakers on Clark***: Karaoke Night $1 Off Long Islands. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, All Things Taylor 1st Wed of month, All Things Beyoncé 2nd Wed of month, All Things Gaga 3rd Wed of month, All Things Dua & Ariana last Wed of month: all 9pm-2am. ***Steamworks:*** Bear Hump Every second Wednesday 6-9pm A monthly mid-week gathering of Furry Men. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $3 House Shots, $5 Stoli Cocktails (All Flavors), $5 Miller Lite Drafts, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts. ***Touche:*** **Open 5pm-4am** Jockstrap Night Free Clothing Check, 4/1 Full Moon Jockstrap Night

**THURSDAY**

***2 Bears Tavern Uptown:*** $5 Premium Well Cocktails, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts. ***@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, RuPaul Drag Race All Stars 6 Viewing Party - 7pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 1pm-2am. ***Charlie's:*** 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month:$4 You Call it's 5pm - 9pm, 8pm - 10pm Mother Rebirth, 10pm - Power up Reloaded. 2nd Thursday of the Month: $4 You Call it's 5pm - 9pm, 8pm - 10pm the Pop Ball, 10pm Scissor Sisters. 4th Thursday of the Month: $4 You Call it's 5pm - 9pm, 8pm - 10pm the Pop Ball, 10pm Vinyl. ***Jackhammer:*** $3 House Shots, $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails, $5 Miller Lite Tallboys, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pool & Darts. ***Kit Kat Lounge:*** Happy Hour 4-6pm $8 WINE, $9 APPS, $10 Martinis.Live Ballet.***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open at 6pm. Dancers at 8pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $4 Premium Well Cocktails, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $5 Deep Eddy Cocktails. ***Shakers on Clark:*** $1 off All Call Liquor Mixed Drinks,Karaoke 10pm-1am. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 3pm, "Let's Go! Thursday" Pop Music Videos in Glass/Side Bars 9pm-2am. In Main Bar: Pink Pony Club 1st Thur of month, other Thursdays are "Let's Go! Latin" or "All Things K-Pop. ***Steamworks:*** Lights Out Thursdays, The Club goes Dark Every Thursday 4pm-4am. ***The Sofo Tap:*** $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails, $5 Stoli Mules (All Flavors), EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts ***Touche:*** Open 5pm - 4am.Throwback Thursdays 70's & 80's Music & Porn By Bijou Video.

Daily Specials;

**FRIDAY**

**2 Bears Tavern Uptown:** HAPPY HOUR (3-7 PM): $4 New Amsterdam Cocktails, $5 Chicago Handshakes, ALL DAY SPECIALS: $3 House Shots, $5 Miller Lite Drafts, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts. **@mosphere:** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 6-8pm, Dancers 10pm-1am. **Baton Show Lounge:** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. **Cell Block:** Open 1pm-2am. **Charlie's**: 1st Friday of the Month 8pm - 11pm Cage Fight Allstars, 11pm Charlie's Presents. 2nd Friday:8pm - 11pm Cage Fight Allstars, 11pm Glow Up. 3rd Friday 8pm - 11pm Cage Fight Allstars, 11pm Thirst Trap. 4th Friday 8pm - 11pm Cage Fight Allstars 11pm Haus of Charlie's. **Jackhammer:** $8 New Amsterdam & Red Bulls, $8 WYNK THC, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pool & Darts. **Kit Kat Lounge:** All Day Brunch All Drag,Brunch Seating Times 11am and 1:30PM. **Sidetrack:** Open at 3pm, TGIF Show Tunes 4-9pm, Friday Night Dance Party 9pm-2am. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** HAPPY HOUR (5-8 PM): $5 Chicago Handshakes, ALL DAY SPECIALS: $6 Tito's Cocktails, $5 Miller Lite Drafts, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts & Pool. **The Sofo Tap:** HAPPY HOUR (3-6 PM): $4 Signature Margaritas, ALL DAY SPECIALS: $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $5 Miller Lite Drafts, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts. **Touche:** Open 5pm - 4am. 3/20 Cowboy Round Up with ILGRA. 3/27 CUBS WHITE SOX FANS FACEOFF. 4/3 Man'Nipple'ate nipple fetish play night. 4/10 April Showers Yellow Hanky Party. 4/17 Cowboy Round Up with ILGRA.

**SATURDAY**

***2 Bears Tavern Uptown:*** HAPPY HOUR (3-7 PM): 1/2 Off All Draft Beers, ALL DAY SPECIALS: $5 Premium Well Cocktails, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts. ***@mosphere:*** $5 Well Cocktails & Draft Beer 3pm-5pm, Dancers 10pm -1am. ***Baton Show Lounge:*** Doors open at 6pm, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 12pm-3am. ***Charlie's:*** 7pm - 11pm SCCDA Country Dancing, 11pm Under the boots tonight. ***Jackhammer:*** $3 House Shots, $8 New Amsterdam & Red Bulls, $8 WYNK THC, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pool & Darts. **Kit Kat Lounge:** All Day Brunch All Drag,Brunch Seating Times 11am and 1:30PM. ***Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** HAPPY HOUR (2-5 PM): $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails, ALL DAY SPECIALS: $5 Lost Coast Tangerine Wheat Drafts, $5 Signature Margaritas, $8 WYNK THC, $3 House Shots, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 11am-2pm. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at 1pm, Post-Brunch SaturGay Fun 1pm-6pm, Saturday Night Dance Party 9pm-3am, Dog Day 1st Saturday of the month 1-5pm. ***The Sofo Tap:*** HAPPY HOUR: (12-3 PM): 1/2 Off All Draft Beers, ALL DAY SPECIALS: $5 Miller Lite Drafts, $5 Signature Margaritas, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts ***Touche:*** Open 2pm - 5am. 3/21 GEAR NIGHT with BLUF/Chicago Best Kilt Legs Contest Dress Code in Club Room BNC 6pm. 3/28 RIPE PARTY Dim Lights, Deep Beats Go-Go Dudes DJ Harry T. 4/4 BEAR NIGHT Bears, Cubs, Otters & More! 4/11 Dungeon Master Night Demo @ midnight CWB 5-9pm, 4/18 GEAR NIGHT with BLUF/Chicago Dress Code in ClubRoom BNC 6pm.

**SUNDAY FUNDAY**

***2 Bears Tavern Uptown:*** $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $6 Chicago Handshakes, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pinball & Darts. ***@mosphere:*** $6 Jack Products, $4 Domestic Draft, House Shots $2. ***Baton Show Lounge:*** Doors Open at 11am, Shows at 7:30pm, 9:30pm & 11:30pm. ***Cell Block:*** Open 12pm-2am ***Charlie's:*** 1st and 3rd Sunday of the Month5pm - 7pm Queeriod, 7pm - 11pm Starlight Karaoke, 11pm Estrellas, Ritmo, y Perreo. 2nd Sunday 5pm -7pm Queeriod Presents Drag U 7pm - 11pm Starlight Karaoke, 11pm Estrellas, Ritmo y Perreo. 4th Sunday 5pm - 7pm Queeriod Presents Boyfriend Material, 7pm - 11pm Starlight Karaoke, 11pm Estrellas, Ritmo y Perreo. ***Hydrate:*** Doors open at 2pm Northalsted's Official after Brunch party. ***Jackhammer:*** HAPPY HOUR (3-7 PM): $3 House Shots, $5 New Amsterdam Cocktails, $7 Jackhammered Long Islands, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Pool & Darts. **Kit Kat Lounge:** All Day Brunch All Drag,Brunch Seating Times 11am and 1:30PM. Sunday Tea Dance DJ Janky and Friends 4pm-10pm $9 Martinis. ***.Lucky Horseshoe:*** Open with dancers at 3pm. $5 drink specials. ***Meeting House Tavern:*** $5 Premium Well Cocktails, $12 Mimosa Carafes, $3 House Shots, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts & Pool. ***North End:*** Open at 11am, $3 Miller Lite Drafts 7-10pm ***Shakers on Clark***: $1 off Bloody Mary's, $1 off Tito's Mules, and $1 off all Revolution beers.. ***Sidetrack:*** Open at Noon, Sunday Funday Show Tunes 4-9pm, Sunday Funday After Dark Dance Party 9pm-2am . ***The Sofo Tap:*** HAPPY HOUR (1-3 PM): $3 House Shots, FREE Hotdogs (while supplies last) ALL DAY SPECIALS: $6 New Amsterdam Cocktails, $5 Miller Lite Drafts, EVERYDAY SPECIALS: $4 Tallboy Beers (Old Style, PBR, Hamm's), $5 Jägermeister, Fireball & Malört Shots, FREE Darts. ***Touche:*** Open 2pm - 4am. Beer Bust $2 Draughts & Sodas Clubroom opens 6pm Movie Night 7pm. 3/27 St Patricks Beer Bust.

**The Next Issue of GRAB hits the streets and online Tuesday April 21st, 2026. Reserve your space today Call 773-707-2660 or email GRABStacy@gmail.com**

# GRAB A HIT

**Top 30 Dance Chart For the First week of March 2026**

Visit nexusradio.fm

| | Artist | Title |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Kaleena Zanders & Shift K3y | The Light |
| 2 | Anna Sofia | B2B |
| 3 | Gil Glaze | Human |
| 4 | Marshmello & Inji | Kissin My Friends |
| 5 | The Archer & Romy Dya | Never Hurt Me (Radio Mix) |
| 6 | D.O.D | Confession Ft. Poppy Baskcomb |
| 7 | Sigala x Leigh Anne x Jonita Gandhi | Hello |
| 8 | The Chainsmokers | Helium Ft. Anna Sofia |
| 9 | TELYKAST & Oaks | Super Powers |
| 10 | Anabel Englund X Kamino | Belong To Me |
| 11 | Leondis | Only U |
| 12 | R3hab & Izzy Bizu | I Had A Dream |
| 13 | Fisher | Rain Radio (Edit) |
| 14 | Yves V x Dimitri Vangelis & Wyman | You & I Ft. Nova Tropics (Radio Edit) |
| 15 | Odium | When The Lights Go Low (Radio Edit) |
| 16 | Twinsick | Glory Days Ft. Hayley May |
| 17 | Juste X Jaxstyle X Jon | Turn The Lights Off |
| 18 | Jes | Forever Young |
| 19 | Lavern | In My Head |
| 20 | Claptone | Black & Gold (Radio Edit) |
| 21 | Notd & Libby Whitehouse | Found Your Love |
| 22 | Robyn | Dopamine (Radio Edit) |
| 23 | Harry Styles | Aperture |
| 24 | Oskar Med K & Haley Joelle | I Think I'm Addicted |
| 25 | Swanky Tunes X Shapov | Favela |
| 26 | Harrison | All The Things She Said (Radio Edit) |
| 27 | Dancingfaraz | The One Ft. Ro (Radio Mix) |
| 28 | Manyfew | Your Love Is All I Need |
| 29 | BONNIE X CLYDE | What Love Can Do |
| 30 | Telykast & Sam Gray | Hold On |

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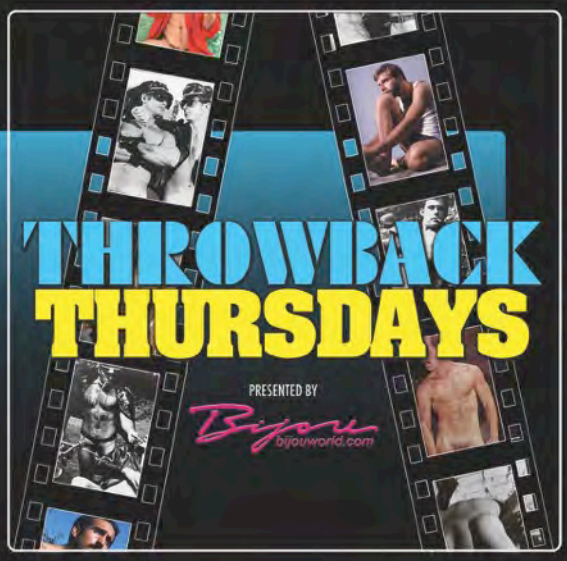


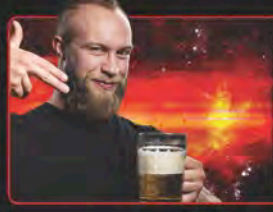

SUNDAY BEER BUST $2.50 DRAUGHT BEERS & $2 SODAS!

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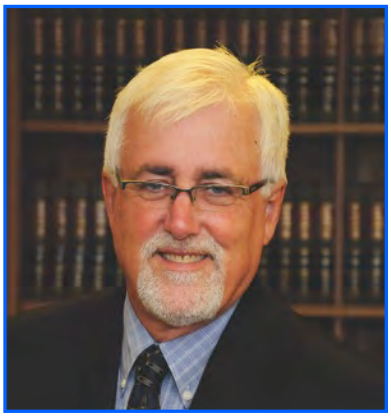
# GRAB ROGER

## The Statute of Limitations on Your Debts: An Absolute Defense



By Roger V. McCaffre-Boss, Esq.

**Q: I recently went to court and settled a credit card debt from over 10 years ago. I was served a subpoena to appear in court and advised that even though I paid the debt out of court, I should honor the subpoena and make an appearance showing my receipt of payment. While awaiting my turn in front of a judge, another person who was subpoenaed for an old debt told the judge "they are trying to collect on a debt that's 10 years old." The judge turned to the lawyer for the collection agency and the lawyer said, "I'm sorry, your honor. I'll have to review that." The judge dismissed the case saying that if the creditor is able to verify recent activity, the defendant may still have to pay. Did I fall victim to an illegal tactic by a collection agency? Is there a statute of limitations on unsecured debt? If so, how is it measured? If collectors leave voicemail messages about a debt from 10 years ago, is that considered recent activity?**

***A:*** To the individual in the question, every day consumers pay off collection accounts and charge-offs, which they do not have to pay because the statute of limitations has already expired on the account and they have not been sued on the account. Consumers pay off these accounts because the accounts still appear on their credit report or they get sued by collection agencies that may have purchased the old debt for pennies on the dollar.

The answer for all consumers with old, unpaid debt is to be aware of the defense of the statute of limitations on your debts prior to any judgment against you by your creditors. Knowing about the statute of limitations in your state can be a powerful weapon and unburden your old debts as creditors have a limited time in which to sue you under the statute of limitations applying to debts. The statute of limitations prohibits collection of a debt where the collector has not sued.

The statute of limitations begins to run from the day the debt-or payment of an open-end account – credit cards – was due. You can double check when your statute of limitations on your credit card debts start ticking by using your credit report as a reference. Your credit report will tell you the date of the last activity for your account. You will have your credit report with the date of the last activity as proof and a defense.

In Illinois, the statute of limitations is five years on open-end accounts which are revolving lines of credit with varying balances. The best example is a credit card account. That time period begins with the last activity such as a charge or payment on the account. Voicemails by credit collectors do not constitute activity to lengthen the time period.

Five years after the last payment or charge, the statute of limitations begins to be an absolute defense. If the creditor files a suit, the consumer has an absolute defense. The consumer must offer the evidence to avoid a judgment on a debt, which has been covered by the statute of limitations. The evidence will consist of papers that the consumer files to support his/her claim that the debt is covered by the statute of limitations. If the creditor sues you and you do not prove to the court that the statute of limitations on the debt has expired, you will have a lawsuit and a judgment against you. It is important that you keep track of the last payment on the account so that you can prove there has been no activity for the five years covered by the statute of limitations.

Also, unknowing consumers will make payments on their credit card accounts even when they are not on their credit report. You make a payment and the credit collector gets another five years. Finally, the statute of limitations does not cause your debt to go away after it expires even though there has been no judgment against you.

*Roger McCaffrey-Boss is a gradute of Hamline University School of Law, St. Paul, Minnesota, and is a member of the Chicago Bar Association. You can email him at* ***RVMLawyer@aol.com****. He suggests that you consult your own lawyer for any specific questions regarding the issues raised in this column.*

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You Are Not Alone
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1. Talking about or making plans for suicide.
2. Expressing hopelessness about the future.
3. Displaying severe/overwhelming emotional pain or distress.
4. Showing worrisome changes in behavior, particularly in combination with the warning signs above, including significant:
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• Changes in sleep (increased or decreased).
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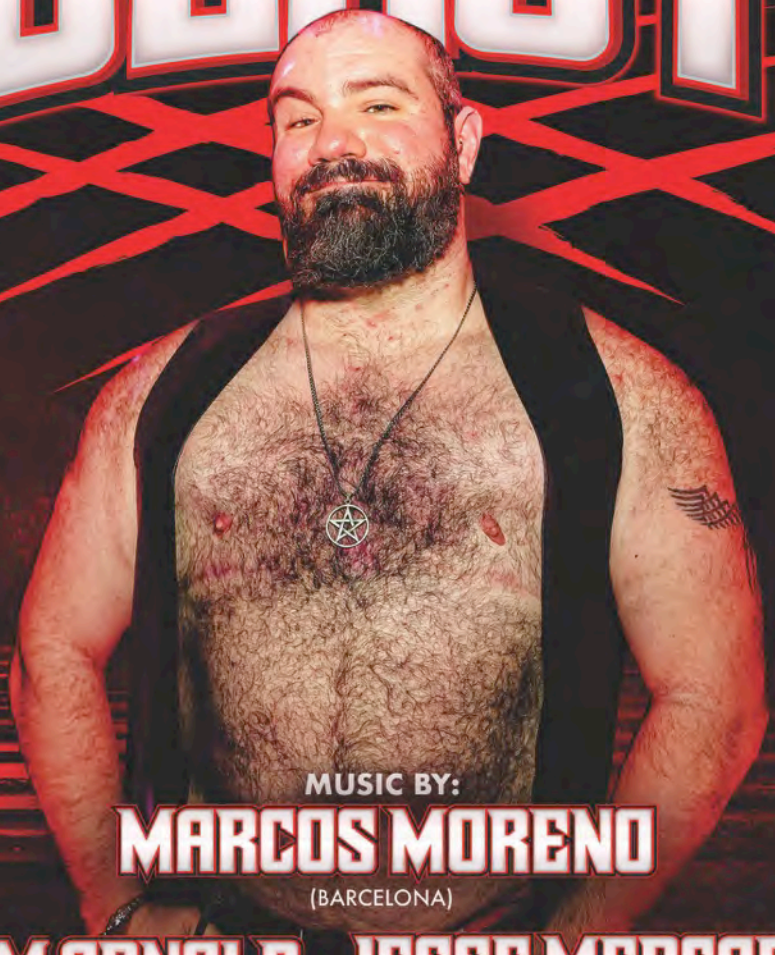

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# GRAB HOLLY

## *Blowing Smoke*

**By Holly Maholm**

I got up late, dressed, and started off for breakfast at Donut Time, where I knew I would meet several of my "work family," consisting of friends with whom I often traded shifts laboring in the kitchen, waiting tables or working the register. Thinking of "families," I recalled what a famous author once said: "Every happy family is supportive, sympathetic and forgiving in the same way; every unhappy family is entitled, quarrelsome and judgmental in its own way." (Or something like that.) My work family, I knew, was almost always "happy."

I walked in the door at Donut Time and, as I approached Phyllis, who was working the register, I observed an expression on her face which she had refined over 25 years teaching high school. That expression said, "You can't fool me; I see you're up to No-Good, and whatever misbehavior you're planning, I won't let you get away with it." She spoke.

"Holly, there are two strange men sitting in that booth over there." (She nodded in their direction.) "You need to keep a watch on those two. I don't trust them a bit." She handed me my coffee, and as she did, she explained. "They came in here early and got two coffees to go. Then, I saw them go outside and take a tour of the village green, like they were inspecting it. Then they came back here, got more coffee and donuts, and – when Aly went to refill their cups – one of them asked her, 'Do you know who owns this shop?' She said she did, and the other one said, 'Look, when the owner comes in, could you tell him we want to talk?' Phyllis continued, "Now you're here, but they don't know you're the owner. So, what's next?"

I picked up my coffee and peach fritters and replied, "Well, I guess I'll go find out." I strolled over to their booth, where I pulled up a chair and offered, "You wanted to meet the owner, and that's me." One of the men – I learned later his name is Eric – did all the talking. He proceeded to express effusive praise of Donut Time, Wellington Green, the coffee and donuts they had ordered, and their waitress, Aly. Except for their appreciation of Aly (whose skirt was way too short), I recognized that early stage of a negotiation wherein one party treats the other to flattery amounting to "Blowing Smoke Up My Skirt." Eric got to the point.

"Here's the thing, Holly. We're here representing a new, start-up chain of upscale coffee shops. Our head office is in Seattle (but we're not the one you're thinking of), and our job is to scout-out locations for new shops. We like Wellington, and we'd like to put one of our shops here. Which gets me to our offer. There are two ways we can open in Wellington. We can buy an empty lot on the green, then build a new building, move in all our ovens and equipment, and hire all new staff. Or the other alternative is: We could buy your shop, here, which seems to be profitable and gets a lot of foot traffic. That is… if you're willing to negotiate selling your store to us?

"But, keep in mind, if we go the first route, we're going to compete with you, and we're going to cut our prices down below yours, even down below our 'cost.' We'll just sell below cost – and take the loss – for as long as it takes to get you to close up. We have 'private equity' money backing us, so we can wait you out till you go bust.

"But, we'd prefer to make you an 'offer you can't refuse.' Meaning, we'd pay you more money than you would earn in a decade running your business. Here's my card. Give me a call when you decide what you want to do." They left, and I refreshed my coffee and headed off to the feed store to consult with Chet, whom I knew to be experienced in business (in addition to his Secret Identity as El Supremo of the High Council of the Patriarchy in our little town).

I explained to Chet the offer I had received, and he replied. "Don't be upset, Holly. This sort of thing happens to lots of businesses that are successful. There's always somebody who wants to 'buy-in' to your success. First thing, you need to tell your co-owners – Cindy and Xandra, if I remember correctly – about the offer. But tell Cindy to put a sock in it!" (Chet knew of Cindy's inability to keep a secret, as we all did).

Chet continued, "Then, you need to find out all you can about that new start-up. It might be a solid offer, or it might just be them Blowing Smoke Up Your Ass."

*(To be continued)*

*Holly Maholm is a transgender woman living in Cleveland, Ohio. Look for Holly's book Offered Magic: My Life Among the Unicorns (now available on Amazon) which collects the first 126 episodes of Holly's adventures involving both magical unicorns and her LGBTQ friends. Send a message to Holly at* ***www.hollymaholm.com.***


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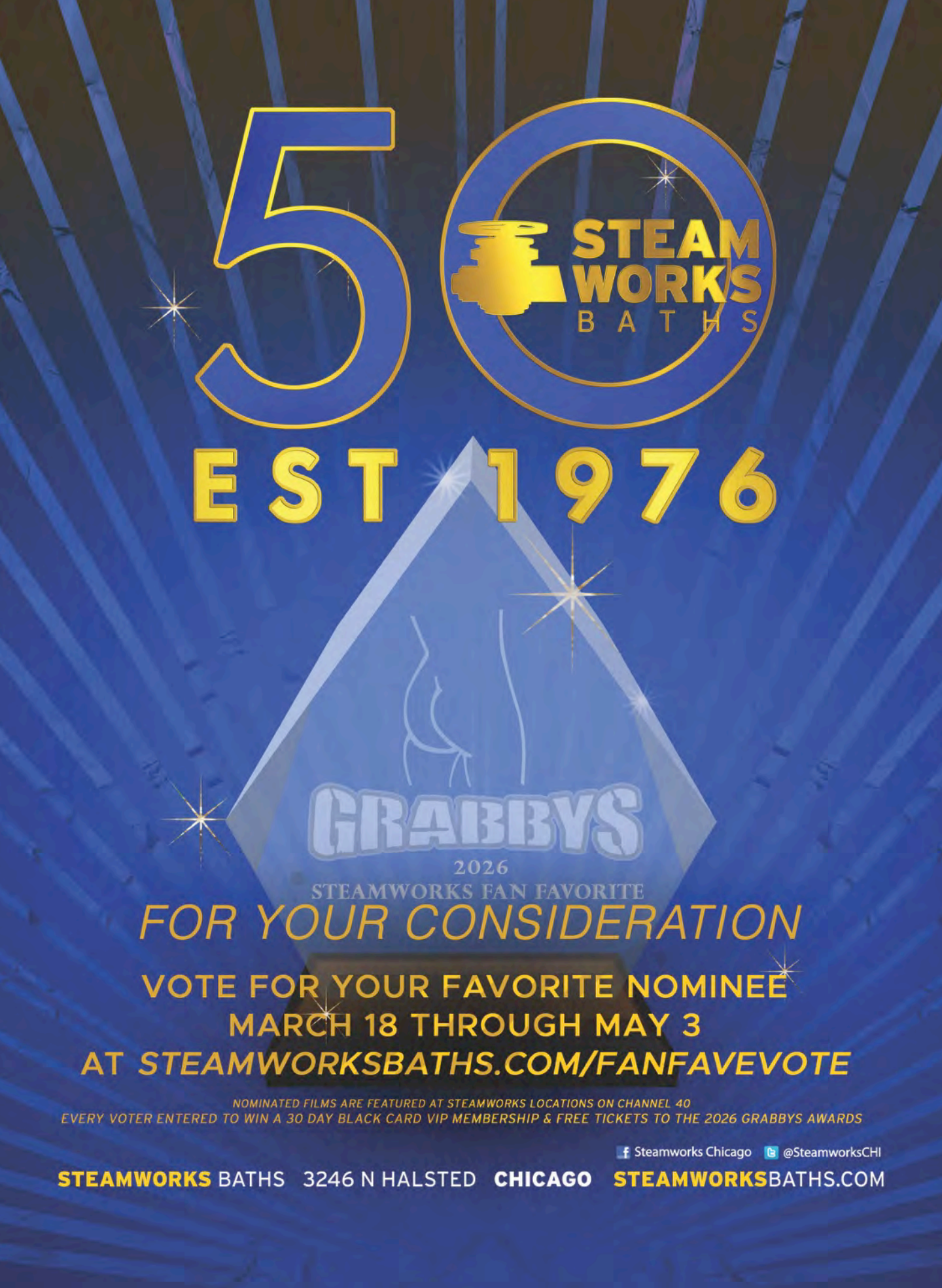
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**BACKBEAT HOTEL UNVEILS FIRST LOOK AT BRANDING AND DESIGN FOR 50-ROOM BOUTIQUE HOTEL COMING TO THE HEART OF CHICAGO'S ICONIC LGBTQ+ NEIGHBORHOOD**

***CHICAGO, IL*** - Following the initial site plan announcement in 2025, Backbeat Hotel is giving the public its first detailed look at the design of the 50-room independent boutique hotel planned for the city's Northalsted community.

Inspired by Chicago's connection to the origins of house music, "Backbeat" draws its name from the city's legendary sound that rose from disco basements and house lofts which created a refuge through rhythm that still lives on Halsted Street today.

Newly released architectural renderings from Studio Rodrigo Buelvas (Miami, FL) showcase the rooftop pool and bar, lobby, and guest room interiors, marking a major milestone ahead of the hotel's anticipated 2028 opening.

"It was important to us that this project feel like a continuation of Northalsted's legacy, not an interruption of it," said ***Bob Sievers***, owner of InFocus Builders, Inc. "We drew inspiration from the existing landscape, including the brickwork, tones, and textures, so the building itself feels connected to the neighborhood rather than imposed upon it."

Designed as a destination for celebration and expression, the renderings reveal a vibrant rooftop pool and bar conceived as a social anchor of the property, featuring skyline views, a retractable roof for all-season flexibility, and elevated entertainment space. Open to the public, the space will serve both hotel guests and local patrons, reinforcing the project's commitment to the broader community and a culture of inclusivity.

Built for gathering and connection, the lobby and lounge areas emphasize warmth and flexibility, combining contemporary design, house-music and disco-inspired details, and sophisticated lighting technology to strike the perfect mood from day to night. The ground floor will also feature a publicly accessible restaurant and bar concept with indoor-outdoor space drawing inspiration from the site's original inhabitant, Yoshi's.

In conjunction with the design unveiling, the hotel has launched its official website at ***http://www.Backbeathotel.com*** and social media channels @Backbeat.Chicago. These platforms will provide construction updates, property insights, and announcements related to programming and partnerships.

"From the beginning, we've envisioned this as more than a hotel," said Sievers. "It's a place that builds on a history of inclusivity and belonging, not just for our guests, but for the community to gather, celebrate, or just enjoy a cup of coffee."

Demolition of the existing structure is slated for later this year, with an estimated 18-month construction timeline. Additional announcements including the F&B partnerships and hiring details are expected as the project progresses.

**INTRODUCING THE TRYST CHICAGO: A NEW ERA OF GAY LUXURY IN CHICAGO'S MOST FAMOUS LGBTQ+ NEIGHBORHOOD**

***CHICAGO, IL*** - Tryst Hospitality, the global leader in luxury LGBTQ+ travel and nightlife, has announced plans for The Tryst Chicago, a new boutique gay luxury hotel proposed for the heart of Chicago's historic Northalsted neighborhood.

Tryst Hospitality has submitted initial plans to the City of Chicago and is beginning a series of community meetings as part of the planning and zoning process. These include conversations with the Northalsted Planning and Zoning Council, Northalsted Business Alliance, East LakeviewNeighbors, and a publicly hosted Zoom meeting with Alderman Lawson and interested neighbors to review the proposal. The project remains in its early planning phase, with community input central to the process.

"Northalsted is one of the most dynamic queer villages in the world, and it deserves a luxury gay hotel that matches its energy," says ***Tristan Schukraft,*** founder and CEO of Tryst Hospitality. "We want to give people a reason to stay in the neighborhood, not just pass through it, creating a space that belongs to locals, welcomes travelers, and becomes a new hub for gay culture and nightlife."

Proposed for the site of the former DS Tequila at 3350–3352 North Halsted Street, which Tristan acquired in 2024, The Tryst Chicago would be a five-story, plus rooftop, 21-room boutique hotel featuring thoughtfully designed public spaces, a new restaurant and nightclub venue, and a rooftop pool.

The Tryst Chicago has been designed with sensitivity to its surroundings. Plans include a fully enclosed rooftop pool and bar to mitigate sound, improved alley circulation and operations to reduce congestion, and architectural scale intended to respect the existing streetscape. The rooftop enclosure allows for year-round use while minimizing noise spillover, and the building's design is intended to respect neighboring properties without blocking views. Envisioned as a small, high-touch luxury hotel rather than a large-scale development, The Tryst Chicago is designed to feel intimate, design-forward, and deeply connected to the community. Like all Tryst properties, the hotel will embrace mindful luxury, incorporating eco-conscious design, eliminating single-use plastics, offering refillable water bottles and water stations, and prioritizing partnerships with local LGBTQ+ nonprofits and minority-owned businesses. The Tryst is working with Chicago-based NEWLOOK Design | Build + Development as the architect and lead designer on the project.

While the award-winning Tryst Hotel brand is known for luxury, that does not mean it is out of reach. Room rates at The Tryst Puerto Vallarta start in the low $200s, reflecting Tryst's belief that true luxury is about more than thread counts or pool parties. It's about being your true self. It's about waking up surrounded by the LGBTQ+ community and knowing you're exactly where you're supposed to be.

With existing and upcoming hotels in Puerto Vallarta, Fire Island, Rio de Janeiro, Wilton Manors, Provincetown, and San Juan, Tryst Hospitality continues to redefine LGBTQ+ travel by creating highend, community-driven hospitality experiences in iconic queer destinations around the world.

For more information on Tryst Hotels visit ***http://www.trysthotels.com***

## EXXXOTICA CELEBRATES 15 YEARS IN CHICAGO WITH LAUNCH OF SPARK! EXPANDING LGBTQIA+ PROGRAMMING APRIL 10-12

EXXXOTICA, presented by MyFreeCams, and the nation's largest adult expo dedicated to love and sex, will celebrate its 15th year at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, IL, April 10-12 with the launch of SPARK!, a new LGBTQIA+ showcase highlighting queer performers, educators, artists and community advocates.

Designed as an intentional expansion of EXXXOTICA's programming, SPARK! creates a dedicated space for LGBTQIA+ visibility, sexual wellness, kink education and artistic expression. The initiative integrates entertainment, health resources and community outreach within the broader event footprint.

SPARK! will feature a curated sexual wellness and healing sanctuary offering HIV and STI testing, peer-led sexual health discussions, trauma-informed clinicians, harm-reduction resources and mental health referrals. Programming will also include survivor healing circles, consent education, chronic illness and sexuality panels, and accessibility-focused features such as sensory-safe spaces and large-print materials.

This year's official theme, "Escape Your Reality," reflects the event's focus on connection, expression and mental wellness.

"'Escape Your Reality' isn't about ignoring what's happening in the world," said ***J. Handy***, founder and CEO of EXXXOTICA. "It's about protecting your mental health, holding onto joy and choosing connection over fear. For more than two decades, EXXXOTICA has been a place where people gather openly and without judgment, and that mission matters now more than ever."

As part of SPARK!, top transgender adult performer Emma Rose will appear as part of EXXXOTICA's Spotlight feature, sponsored by LoyalFans (https://loyalfans.com). Since 2020, Rose has appeared in series including Transfixed, Oopsie and Switch, and has received multiple adult industry honors, including being named "Favorite Trans Performer" as voted by the fans at last year's EXXXOTICA Fan Choice Awards (The Fannys) and this year's AVN Awards.

Show hours:
Friday: 5 p.m.–11 p.m.
Saturday: 1 p.m.–10 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m.–6 p.m.

Tickets are now available at **http://www.EXXXOTICAexpo.com.**

## THE 2026 GRABBY AWARDS CELEBRATE 27 YEARS WITH COHOSTS CHI CHI LARUE, SISTER ROMA, ADAM SNOW, AND SEAN XAVIER SATURDAY MAY 23rd AT METRO THEATER

The annual GRABBYS Award Show highlighting top talent and performances in the gay erotic film industry will take place in Chicago on Saturday, May 23rd.

Celebrating its 27th anniversary, the GRABBYS are excited to announce cohosts ChiChi LaRue and Sister Roma, Adam Snow and Sean Xavier A new category is also being presented this year: Best Content Creator.

Visit http://www.GrabbyAwards.com, between March 5th through April 2nd to vote for your favorite Stars.

Tickets for this years show will be available for purchase online at **www.GrabbyAwards.com** or by calling 773-707-2660 beginning April 15th.

This years host hotel will be The Wade located at 644 N. Lakeshore Drive with rates starting at $169+ Tax. www.AwardsShowHotel.com

The show will once again be held at the Metro Theater, 3730 N. Clark Street. Doors open at 6 p.m. with The Red Carpet beginning at that time with the show starting promptly at 7 p.m. There will be a cash bar prior to and during the show.

Numerous parties and events surround the GRABBYS and will be announced this soon.

The Presenting Sponsor this year is JustFor.Fans. Also returning as sponsors are Swiss Navy Lube, Squirt.org, Steamworks Baths, Carnal+. New this year is Chaturbate.

*(Please note it was previously announced that Morgan McMichaels would be a cohost however due to A scheduling conflict she will not be able to attend).*

*Photos By Anthony Meade*

Touché

## CHICAGO TATTOO ARTS FESTIVAL RETURNS MARCH 20-22

The internationally renowned Chicago Tattoo Arts Festival, produced by Villain Arts, is set to return for an unforgettable weekend celebrating tattoo artistry, culture, and live entertainment. Taking place at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, IL, this three-day event will feature hundreds of world-class tattoo artists, unique vendors, and nonstop live performances.

From Friday, March 20 through Sunday, March 22, 2026, attendees will have the opportunity to get tattooed by some of the most talented artists from across the country and around the globe. Whether you're looking for black & grey realism, fine line, bold traditional, color work, or a fully custom design, the Chicago Tattoo Arts Festival offers something for every style and collector.

Beyond tattooing, the festival delivers a full lineup of live entertainment throughout the weekend. Guests can experience jaw-dropping sideshow acts, live human suspension, interactive performances, and unique attractions that make this event much more than a tattoo convention—it's a full cultural experience.

The event will also host a wide variety of vendors offering everything from tattoo supplies and apparel to artwork, jewelry, and lifestyle goods. It's the perfect place to shop, connect with artists, and immerse yourself in the tattoo community.

A highlight of the weekend is the daily tattoo contests, where artists compete in categories such as Tattoo of the Day and the prestigious Best of Show, showcasing some of the finest work created live during the event.

The Chicago Tattoo Arts Festival is open to all ages! Must be 18 with valid ID to get tattooed.

EVENT DETAILS:
Dates: March 20–22, 2026

Location: Donald E. Stephens Convention Center5555 N River Rd Rosemont, IL

Hours:
Friday: 2 PM – 11 PM
Saturday: 11 AM – 11 PM
Sunday: 11 AM – 8 PM

Tickets Available at the door or online

For tickets, artist lineup, and hotel information, visit: ***http://www.VillainArts.com***

## VIVENT HEALTH + TPAN PRESENTS DINING OUT FOR LIFE CHICAGO ON APRIL 23

On Thursday, April 23, Vivent Health + TPAN will host its 8th annual Dining Out For Life to raise funds for essential healthcare and services for people in Chicago affected by HIV. For one day only, many of the city's restaurants will donate a generous portion of their proceeds to fund HIV/AIDS care, prevention, education, testing, and other essential services for people in Chicago.

Vivent Health is one of the nation's leading HIV care providers, serving Chicagoans living with HIV and those who are affected by this disease. "As a community-based organization, it's critical that Vivent Health + TPAN delivers programs that meet the most important health needs of our community and is nimble so we can adapt as these needs change," said ***Lorraine Hayes***, Senior Director of Philanthropy and Community Engagement at Vivent Health + TPAN. "Dining Out For Life Chicago is instrumental in ensuring this happens. All funds raised during this one-day event will be used to support these local programs. By dining out and supporting local restaurants, Chicagoans will also support their fellow Chicagoans affected by HIV/AIDS."

Contributions made through Dining Out for Life will support community programs such as the Tea Room, Vivent Health + TPAN's drop-in youth center for members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies between the ages of 18-29; Positively Aging, a local program dedicated to the unique HIV-related health and psychosocial needs of adults ages 50 and older; as well as Vivent Health + TPAN's program expansion, enabling it to serve more Chicagoans in need.

To learn more about Dining Out for Life and for a list of participating restaurants,visit ***http://www.tpan.com/diningout.***

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# GRAB A BOOK

**By Terri Schlichenmeyer**

***"La Lucci"*** *by Susan Lucci with Laura Morton c.2026, Blackstone Publishing $29.99 196 pages*

They're among the world's greatest love stories.

You know them well: Marc Antony and Cleopatra. Abelard and Heloise. Phoebe and Langley. Cliff and Nina. Jesse and Angie, Opal and Palmer, Palmer and Daisy, Tad and Dixie. Now read "La Lucci" by Susan Lucci, with Laura Morton, and you might also think of Susan and Helmut.

When she was a very small girl, Susan Lucci loved to perform. Also when she was young, she learned that words have power. She vowed to use them for good for the rest of her life. Her parents, she says, were supportive and her family, loving. Because of her Italian heritage, she was "ethnic looking" but Lucci's mother was careful to point out dark-haired beauties on TV and elsewhere, giving Lucci a foundation of confidence.

That's just one of the things for which Lucci says she's grateful. In fact, she says, "Prayers of gratitude are how I begin and end each day."

She is particularly grateful for becoming a mother to her two adult children, and to the doctors who saved her son's life when he was a newborn. Lucci writes about gratitude for her long career. She was a keystone character on TV's All My Children, and she learned a lot from older actors on the show, and from Agnes Nixon, the creator of it. She says she still keeps in touch with many of her former costars. She is thankful for her mother's caretakers, who stepped in when dementia struck. Grateful for more doctors, who did heart-saving work when Lucci had a clogged artery. Grateful for friends, opportunities, life, grandchildren, and a career that continues.

And she's grateful for the love she shared with her husband, Helmut Huber, who died nearly four years ago. Grateful for the chance to grieve, to heal, and to continue.

And yet, she says of her husband: "He was never timid, but I know he was afraid at the end, and that kills me down to my soul."

"It's been fifteen years since Erica Kane and I parted ways," says author Susan Lucci (with Laura Morton), and she says that people still approach her to confirm or deny rumors of the show's resurrection. There's still no answer to that here (sorry, fans), but what you'll find inside "La Lucci" is still exceptionally generous.

If this book were just filled with stories, you'd like it just fine. If it was only about Lucci's faith and her gratitude – words that happen to appear very frequently here – you'd still like reading it. But Lucci tells her stories of family, children and All My Children, while also offering help to couples who've endured miscarriage, women who've had heart problems, and widow(ers) who are spinning and need the kindness of someone who's lived loss, too.

These are the other things you'll find in "La Lucci," in a voice you'll hear in your head, if you spent your lunch hours glued to the TV back in the day. It's a comfortable, fun read for fans. It's a story you'll love..

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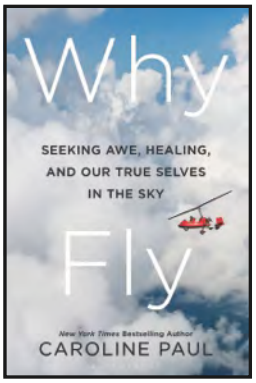
***"Why Fly: Seeking Awe, Healing, and Our True Selves in the Sky"*** *by Caroline Paul c.2026, Bloomsbury $27.99 256 pages*




Tray table in the upright position. Check. You're seat's unreclined, the airflow above your head is just the way you like it, and you're ready to go. The flight crew is making final preparations. The lights are off and the plane is backing up. All you need now is "Why Fly" by Caroline Paul, and buckle up.

When she was very young, Caroline Paul was "obsessed" with tales of adventure, devouring accounts written by men of their derring-do. The only female adventure-seeker she knew about then was Amelia Earhart; later, she learned of other adventuresome women, including aviatrix Bessie Coleman, and Paul was transfixed.

Time passed; Paul grew up to create a life of adventure all her own.

Then, the year her marriage started to fracture, she switched her obsession from general exploits to flight.

Specifically, Paul loves experimental aircraft, some of which, like her "trike," can be made from a kit at home. Others, like Woodstock, her beloved yellow gyrocopter, are major purchases that operate under different FAA rules. All flying has rules, she says, even if it seems like it should be as freewheeling as the birds it mimics.

She loves the pre-flight checklist, which is pure anticipation as well as a series of safety measures; if only a relationship had the same ritual. Paul loves her hangar, as a place of comfort and for flight in all senses of the word. She enjoys thinking about historic tales of flying, going back before the Wright Brothers, and including a man who went aloft on a lawn chair via helium-filled weather balloons.

The mere idea that she can fly any time is like a gift to Paul.

She knows a lot of people are terrified of flying, but it's near-totally safe: generally, there's a one in almost 14 million chance of perishing in a commercial airline disaster – although, to Paul's embarrassment and her dismay, it's possible that both the smallest planes and the grandest loves might crash…

If you're a fan of flying, you know what to do here. If you fear it, pry your fingernails off the armrests, take a deep breath, and head to the shelves. "Why Fly" might help you change your mind.

It's not just that author Caroline Paul enjoys being airborne, and she tells you. It's not that she's honest in her explanations of being in love and being aloft. It's the meditative aura you'll get as you're reading this book that makes it so appealing, despite the sometimes technical information that may flummox you between the Zen-ness. It's not overwhelming; it mixes well with the history Paul includes, biographies, the science, heartbreak, and exciting tales of adventure and risk, but it's there. Readers and romantics who love the outdoors, can't resist a good mountain, and crave activity won't mind it, though, not at all.

If you own a plane – or want to – you'll want this book, too. It's a great waiting-at-the-airport tale, or a tuck-in-your-suitcase-for-later read. Find "Why Fly" and you'll see that it's an upright kind of book.

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## CHICAGO'S HOME FOR NEW VOCAL WORKS TO PRESENT OFF-NIGHTS AT THE SOMETIMES CAFE MARCH 19-22 AT BRAMBLE ARTS LOFT

Thompson Street Opera Company kicks off 2026 with the world premiere of *OFF-NIGHTS AT THE SOMETIMES CAFÉ*, a joyful queer cabaret work by non-binary composer ***Dave Walther***. This campy parody of a noir mystery will be performed March 19-22 on the Beatrice Stage of the Bramble Arts Loft, with a cast of singing actors, actor-musicians, and professional drag performers.

Instead of following a detective solving a crime, the "hard-boiled" narrator of Off-Nights is a cabaret pianist, taking the audience through the murky paths of desire and attraction that draw the characters towards (or away from) each other, resolving just in time for the final bow. In the role of the Narrator is Chicago stalwart and Jeff Award winner ***Kingsley Day***, accompanying the cast live at the piano each night. The married couple who manages the titular café will be played by local favorites ***Katherine Petersen*** and ***Brian Pember,*** just weeks after appearing onstage with Chicago Opera Theater in the ensemble of *DER SILBERSEE*. Playing a dubiously qualified psychic is mezzo-soprano ***Jade Dashá***, fresh from understudying in *KATIE: THE STRONGEST OF THE STRONG* with Lyric Opera Unlimited. Baritone ***Alexander Quackenbush*** returns to the TSOC stage as Drew, a new cafe patron who catches nearly everyone's eye.

For Tickets visit ***www.thompsonstreetopera.org/events.*** or at the door

## OPEN SPACE ARTS TO STAGE CHICAGO PREMIERE OF *A THIRD WAY*, APRIL 3-19

Open Space Arts has announced it will stage the Chicago premiere of A THIRD WAY, from April 3 through 19. A THIRD WAY is a sharply funny, deeply compassionate new play that reimagines what love, marriage, and family can look like in the 21st century. Winner of the *Del Shores Foundation Playwriting Award*, the play received its acclaimed world premiere in 2024 at Actor's Express in Atlanta, where it was praised for its emotional honesty, contemporary relevance, and nuanced queer storytelling. *ARTSATL* said, it was "deeply introspective" in addition to having "some truly hilarious moments, with a playful energy throughout." Open Space Arts' founder ***David G. Zak***, who was recently nominated for the Jeff Awards for Direction – Short Run Production for OSA's *MR. PARKER*, will direct a cast to be announced. *A THIRD WAY* will play in Open Space Arts' intimate 25-seat theatre at 1411 W. Wilson Ave., Chicago.

At the center of the play are Nico and Matt, a married couple committed to building a relationship that exists outside traditional binaries. When familiar figures from the past and unexpected new connections enter their world, long-standing assumptions are quietly—and sometimes explosively—challenged. With humor, warmth, and razor-sharp insight, *A THIRD WAY* explores the fragile balance between desire and responsibility, freedom and commitment. Rather than offering easy answers, the play invites audiences to sit inside uncertainty, asking what it really means to choose love when there are no clear rules.

Tickets are on sale now at ***www.openspacearts.org***

## WORLD PREMIERE! STEPPENWOLF THEATRE COMPANY CONTINUES 50TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON WITH *WINDFALL APRIL 9 – MAY 31, 2026 IN STEPPENWOLF'S ENSEMBLE THEATER*

Steppenwolf Theatre Company, the nation's premier ensemble theater company, is pleased to announce full casting for its world premiere of Windfall, a gripping new work by Academy Award-winning ensemble member ***Tarell Alvin McCraney,*** directed by ***Awoye Timpo***.

Windfall reunites ensemble members ***Alana Arenas, Glenn Davis*** and ***Jon Michael Hill***, who starred in Steppenwolf's Tony and Pulitzer Prize-winning drama *Purpose,* joined by ensemble member ***Namir Smallwood***, direct from his Broadway turn in *Bug*. Rounding out the cast, Steppenwolf welcomes ***Esco Jouléy*** (*Dying for Sex*) and ***Michael Potts*** (*The Wire, The Piano Lesson–Broadway*), both in their Steppenwolf debuts.

This is a story about money. Don't let them fool you otherwise. When a father loses his child in a clash with the police, he is visited by three strangers who advise him to take the city's cash settlement, relocate and forget his grief – or else remain, haunted by memories of the world his child fought so hard to protect. This lyrical world premiere is a vital and timely look at the spirit of activism set against the most indifferent system of them all: the almighty dollar.

Continuing Steppenwolf's 50th Anniversary Season, Windfall will play April 9 – May 31, 2026 in Steppenwolf's Ensemble Theater, 1646 N. Halsted St. in Chicago.

Tickets are now on sale at s***teppenwolf.org*** and the Box Office at ***(312) 335-1650.***

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